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Unity of Worship
Earnestly Recommended.

IN A
SERMON
PREACH'D
At the Cathedral Church
IN
NORWICH,

January 9. 1703.

Being the First Sunday after Epiphany.
Before the Right Worshipful the Mayor,
and Court of Aldermen.

By THO. CLAYTON, M. A. and Rector of the
Parish of St. Michael, at the Pleas in Norwich.

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SEERMON

At the Cathedral Church



Before the Right Worshipful Mayor
and Court of Aldermen

THE CLAYTON, M.A. and Rector of the
Parish of St. Andrew, at the Parish Church

LONDON:
Printed by J. G. & J. W. Smith, 10, St. Paul's Church-yard.

TO THE
Right Worshipful
JOHN FREEMAN Esq; Mayor:

THE
Justices, Sheriffs, and Aldermen,
OF THE
City of **NORWICH.**

GENTLEMEN,

THE best, and only Defence I can
make, for the Publishing this
Discourse, is Obedience to your
Order, and the Usefulness of the Sub-
ject at all times, but now more especi-
ally. For whoever looks upon the un-
happy Divisions now reigning among us,
and the fatal Influences they are like to
have upon our Church and State; will
I hope be inclin'd, to pardon the ill
management of a Subject, which was
chosen.

chosen on purpose, to lend a helping hand to the preventing of them. This I hope will be thought, as really it was, my only design, to prove which, I have in the whole Discourse, govern'd my self by that Spirit of Christian Charity, which I so heartily recommend to others; and if this can be any ways furthered by it, in convincing any, of the Unlawfulness of Separating from our Church, and by abating the Heats and Animosities of both sides, which are a Scandal to our Holy Religion, I shall bless Almighty God, for being an Instrument, tho' but a weak one, of so great and publick a Good.

I am, with all Respect

Your most Faithful,
and most Oblig'd Servant

Norwich,
Jan. 22.
1703.

THO. CLAYTON.

Unity of Worship

Earnestly Recommended.

Romans 12. 4, 5.

For as we have many Members in one Body, and all Members have not the same Office ; so we being many are one Body in Christ, and every one Members one of another.

THESE Words are part of that Portion of Scripture, which our Church has thought fit to appoint for the Epistle for this Day : Most wisely considering, that this being the time wherein we Commemorate the coming in of the *Gentiles*, that they should be fellow Heirs, and of the same Body, and partakers of God's Promise in Christ by the Gospel : There could not be any Advice more effectual, to the Ends, and Institution of this Church, then what is contained in them. For when the nature of the Church was thus defin'd, to extend to all the World, both *Jews* and *Gentiles* : It seem'd necessary there should be some Rules and Obligations

ligations laid down, to preserve and keep the Unity of the Catholick Church entire. And tho' the Words of the Text, may seem in their primary Sense to concern those who were dedicated by their Office, to the more immediate Service of the Church: Yet if we look into the following Directions of the Chapter, we shall find that they take in the Carriage, and Behaviour of all Christians in general. And this must needs follow in the reason of the Thing, that as the Body of the Church, is compos'd of all its Members, so all the particular Members, are concern'd for the Peace and Unity of it. *For as we have many Members in one Body, and all Members have not the same Office: So we being many are one Body in Christ, and every one Members one of another.*

What a happy State and Condition should we be in, and how amiable would the Gospel and the Christian Religion appear in the World; had but Men a due consideration of, and regard to what the Apostle so earnestly advises in the Text: And to this end a little before it, that we would not be conformed to this World, that is, so eagerly pursue our Temporal Interest, and Secular Power; as to break the Peace and Unity of the Church, and to undermine all the good effects, which the Christian Religion was to have upon the Minds of Men.

Now to Establish those who are in the entire Communion of our Church, and to show the Mischief, and Unlawfulness, of a Partial, or Total separation from it; shall be the business of my ensuing Discourse. And as I shall always preserve a due Temper, and Christian Charity, for those who shall Dis-

sent

sent from my Opinion: So I may reasonably hope the same from them. For as they who are without the Church, run a great hazard of their Salvation: So those who are within, forfeit all the Mercies and Benefits of the Gospel, when once they lose their Love and Affection to their Brethren: For the same Text which tells us, *we ought all to be Members of one Body*, tells us also, *that we ought to be Members one of another.*

In order therefore to proceed on the Subject before us, We may in the first place, lay down this as a plain and undeniable Proposition from the Text, That Christ Jesus came to build up a Church here on Earth: which Church, tho' it was to consist of many Members, yet was it to be but one Body, ~~trusting~~ *united* to himself. For so are the Words, *that as we have many Members in one Body, so we being many are one Body in Christ.*

Which being made out, I shall in the second place, endeavour to show the high Obligations we have all of us, to preserve the Peace and Unity of the Church, as far as possibly we are able, and is consistent with the Standing Rules of Christian Love and Charity. For we must always keep in mind, *that we are Members one of another.*

Thirdly and Lastly, I shall beg leave to offer some Advice, (as my particular relation to the Service of God may Authorize) to Establish those who are in Unity of the Church, and to convince, and reduce those who are guilty of the breach of it.

And *First*, We may lay down this as a plain, and undeniable Proposition from the Text, That Christ Jesus came into the World, to plant a Church here, which tho' it was to consist of many Members, yet was it to be but one Body, united to himself. For so are the Words, *that as we have many Members in one Body, so we being many are one Body in Christ*. To prove which, I shall not go back so far, as the Antient Promises, made over to *Abraham*, in the Old Testament, that from his Loins a Messias should arise, who should set up a Church, for the Admission of both *Jews*, and *Gentiles* into that Salvation, which he was to purchase with his Blood: Neither shall I mention those clear Predictions, and Discoveries of Christ's Church, or Spiritual Kingdom, so frequently spoken of by the Prophet *Isaiah*: Tho' these are very convincing Arguments, of the Harmony of the Gospel, with the Old Testament, which contain'd the Types and Shadows of it. But I shall show the Church's Charter from the Institution of our Saviour Christ, who was the Son of God, and who brought the most Authentick Credentials, of his being sent from Heaven. *I came forth from the Father, and am come into the World. And again, I came down from Heaven, not to do my own Will, but the Will of him that sent me*. Here we have Christ's Authority, derived from the Fountain of all Power God the Father. Let's hear then what our Blessed Lord did, pursuant to this Divine Commission, he preach'd we find openly to the *Jews*, a great Multitude both of Men and Women, being constant followers of him: And that he might lay a regular Foundation of that Church, he was building up: *We read that when it was Day, he called*

John 16. 38.

John 6. 38.

Luke 6. 13.

called to him his Disciples : and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named Apostles. These were to be along with him in all his Ministry, to learn the Doctrines, and Precepts of that new Dispensation he came to make known to the World, and to be Eye-witnesses of his Death, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension; and of his fulfilling those things which were spoken of him in the Scriptures.

And when Christ had thus made known his Father's Will, and perform'd the business he was sent into the World for: When the Apostles were abundantly convinc'd that Jesus was the Christ, by the Miracles they saw him Work; as appears by their Confession: I say, when all these previous things were done, for the planting and setting up a Church; it was then necessary, that some Persons should be legally

John 6. 67,
68, 69.

Commissioned to make known, and to propagate to all the World, the glad tidings of the Gospel, and of that Salvation which Christ had purchas'd for us. And this we find was done in a most Solemn, and particular manner; for after our Blessed Lord had paid the Price of our Redemption by his Blood, and according to the Covenant between him, and the Father, entituled himself to the Government of that Church, which he had planted: He then gave his Apostles an ample and large Commission; as we may read:

Then said Jesus, speaking to his Apostles, Peace be unto you, as my Father hath sent me, so send I you; and when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said unto them, receive ye the Holy Ghost; whosoever Sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them: and whosoever Sins ye retain, they are retained. This founds the Jurisdiction of the Church, and appoints how

John 20. 21,
22, 23.

Mat. 28. 18,
19, 20.

the Ministers, and Governours of it, are to be admitted to their respective Offices: And that is by a Legal Mission, for how shall they Preach except they be sent? Which Authority of Preaching, is fully settled, and conveyed by another grant: *And Jesus came and spake unto them, i. e. to the Apostles, saying, All Power is given unto me, in Heaven and in Earth, go ye therefore and Teach, or Disciple all Nations; Baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the World. Amen.*

Luke 24. 49.

Thus far our Saviour went while he was here on Earth, in the setting of his Church; he gave his Apostles full Power, and Authority, to Preach the Gospel; and to appoint Successors to them, for the Feeding, and Governing his Flock: Only restraining them from the Execution of their Office, till the Gifts of the Holy Ghost, should in a most plentiful manner be poured forth upon them; as appears by his last Words: *And behold I send the Promise of my Father upon you, but tarry ye in the City of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with Power from on high.*

Acts 2. 1, 2.

And now the Holy Spirit, the third Person in the Blessed Trinity, was to finish, and compleat this Platform of a Church, which Christ had laid: And accordingly we read of those extraordinary Gifts of the Holy Ghost, bestowed upon the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost: *For they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other Tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

And

And when the Apostles were thus furnished with the Miraculous Assistances of the Blessed Spirit, they then dispers'd themselves and enter'd upon the business they were sent about: Preaching Jesus, and the Resurrection, convincing both Jews, and Gentiles, of the Truth of Christianity, by Arguments and by Miracles. And in order to convey this Holy Religion to all succeeding Generations, they Ordained Bishops and Elders, in all the Churches which they planted: Instances we have of this in Timothy, and Titus, the one Bishop of Ephesus, the other of Crete.

And by this Regular, and Orderly way, was the Gospel made known in the Apostle's times to many and remote Countries; and the Church grew, and flourish'd, both in the number and ~~Priests~~ *piety* of those who came into the bosom of it.

But notwithstanding the Excellency of this Divine Institution, the Devil was very busie, and very early so, to raise up Men of corrupt Principles, and perverse Tempers, to sow Schisms, and Divisions in it: Knowing that to be the most effectual way, to defeat the great Ends and Designs of the Gospel. The Apostles were very sensible, and aware of this Stratagem, and therefore laid in all their Care against it:

St. Paul in a more especial manner, as we read, *Now Rom. 16. 17. I beseech you, Brethren, mark them which cause Di-*

visions and Offences, contrary to the Doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own Bellies; and by good Words and fair Speeches deceive the Hearts of the Simple. And in another place, I beseech you Brethren, by the name of our
Lord

1 Cor. I. 10,
11.

Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no Divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same Mind, and in the same Judgment. See with what earnestness he dissuades them from any kind of Separation. *I beseech you Brethren, and I beseech you in the name of our Lord Jesus:* He would not use Expressions of this kind, if the Peace and Unity of the Church were a matter of such Indifferency, as some in our days would have it thought to be.

1 Cor. I.

Such would do well to lay aside all Prejudice, and coolly, and soberly, to read what the Apostle further says as to this point: *There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit: And there are differences of Administrations, but the same Lord. But all these worketh that one and the self same Spirit, for as the Body is one, and hath many Members, and all the Members of that one Body, being many are one Body: So also is Christ.* The whole Chapter is well worth our reading over and over again: Because it gives us, the most lively representation of Christ's Mystical Body the Church, by the Allusion to the Members of our natural Body. To name one place more, because it expresses so fully the Unity of the Church: They are the Words of the same Apostle, he beseeches them to endeavour to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace. For says he, *There is one Body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in hope of your calling; one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God, and Father of all;* And he farther tells us, *That Christ gave some Apostles: and some Prophets: and some Evangelists: and some Pastors and Teachers; for the perfecting of the Saints,*

Ephes. 4. 3,
4, 5, 6, 11,
12, 13, 14.

Saints, for the work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ: till we all come in the Unity of the Faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man, unto the measure of the Stature of the fulness of Christ. He also lays before us the good Effects of this Unity of the Church, (which alone, is enough to convince us of the reasonableness, and even necessity of it) and that is, That we may be henceforth no more Children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of Doctrine, by the sleight of Men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.

And Men are justly given up to those Delusions before mention'd, when out of Humour or Interest, they separate from that Church, which the Providence of God has plac'd them in, and which they may Lawfully hold Communion with.

And thus I have endeavoured to show that Christ Jesus founded a Church here on Earth, and that this Church, by the Testimony of the Apostles who were inspired, was but one Body united unto Christ, tho' compos'd of many Members. And I have withal shown, how watchful the Apostles were to suppress all manner of Schisms and Divisions, as they arose in the Church, and to caution those under their Care, that they be very mindful of the Peace and Unity of it: To mark those who cause Divisions in it, and to avoid them. And for the proof of all this, I have confin'd my self to the Holy Scriptures, from whence we must draw the Original of the Christian Institution: And I think nothing can be more plainly deliver'd there, then that as the Church is but one Body under Christ, so we should all

all make it our greatest care and concern, to keep up as far as we are able the Peace and Unity of it.

Which was the second thing I propos'd to speak to; namely, to shew the high Obligations we have all of us, to preserve the Peace and Unity of the Church, as far as possibly we are able, and is consistent with the standing Rules of Christian Love and Charity: For we must always keep in mind, *that we are Members one of another.*

And that upon these two accounts more especially.

First, Because such an Union in the Church, is expressly commanded by Almighty God. And,

Secondly, Because nothing does more promote the good and welfare of Religion, then such an Union.

And these I think are Considerations sufficient, to any Person that duly weighs 'em, to engage all his endeavours to the procuring of it.

First, It is the duty of all of us, as far as possibly we are able, to preserve the Unity of the Church, because it is expressly commanded by Almighty God. There will be little occasion to insist here upon the proof of this, it being I think clearly enough made out, by what has been already said about our Saviour's Institution of a Church: And the account the Apostles have so plainly delivered, of the Unity, and entire Connexion which there ought to be of
all

all the Parts and Members of it. I shall only further observe, that it was the main, I may say whole end and design, of our Blessed Lord's coming into the World, to procure Peace between God and Man, and establish it among one another; according to that Doxology of the Holy Angels, at his entrance upon Earth; *Glory be to God on high, on Earth Peace, good will towards Men.* And this Peace and Love, did he set forward, both by his Precepts and Examples: He lived in a peaceable compliance to the Government, both Civil and Ecclesiastical; and tho' he came to Institute a new Religion, yet he lived in Conformity to the Jewish Church, under which he was born and bred up. And as he was a strict observer of Peace and Unity himself, so did he as expressly command it to his Disciples and Followers. And that so weighty a duty of his Religion, might have a lasting Impression upon them; he bequeaths as the most valuable Legacy he could give them. *Peace I leave with you, my Peace I give unto you.* John 14. 27. And certainly no Peace is more to be esteem'd, or more necessary to a Christian State, then the Peace of the Church. Which consideration should methinks affects us, with the Sense of the highest Obligations, *to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace.*

I know it is the Plea of those who separate from our Church, that as on the one hand they are bound to keep the Peace and Unity of the Church; so on the other hand, they are equally oblig'd, not to go against their Conscience, by holding Communion with that Church, where any thing Sinful or Unlawful is imposed upon them. In answer to
C this,

this, we must grant, that did our Church oblige them to Subscribe to any Doctrine, which is plainly contrary to the Word of God. Did she prescribe any thing in her Worship which were Sinful? Were there any thing wanting either in the Preaching of God's Word, the Administration of the Sacraments, the Profession of the true Faith, or in the Exercise of Discipline, and Regular Admission of Persons into the Orders, and Offices of the Church: Were there I say a manifest Failure in these, or any Fundamentals of the Christian Religion: They would then have some good colour for separating from us; for upon some of these Reasons it was, that we departed from the Church of *Rome*. But the Case of the Church of *England*, has been so Learnedly, and clearly Vindicated from any Imputations of this nature; that I think the most judicious of our Dissenters now a Days, don't think fit to charge any of them upon us. And therefore if they cannot charge the Terms of our Communion, with being Sinful or Unlawful: I cannot see how they can excuse themselves, of being guilty of the breach of the Unity of the Church. This is I confess a heavy charge, because we find in the Scriptures a heavy punishment denounc'd against those, who stand thus deservedly accus'd.

And because some may think those of our Church, partial to the Cause they have embrac'd, (though upon never so good Reason and sound Principles) I shall therefore chuse to give you the Sense and Determination in this point, of one of the greatest, and most learned of the Reformers beyond the Seas:

Seas: And that is Mr. Calvin; what he says as to this case, was spoken before the Platform of Discipline made by him at Geneva: I remark this, because his Opinion may be look'd upon as more unprejudic'd, and so more to be relied upon. His Words are to this purpose, where speaking of the Nature and Constitution of the Church, he says,

' We make these the true marks of a Church, IVth Book of Institut. Sect. 10, 11, 12.
 ' the Preaching of the Word and Administration
 ' of the Sacraments: Wherever the Preaching of
 ' the Gospel is reverently heard, and the Sacra-
 ' ments are not neglected, there without doubt is
 ' the true appearance of a Church: To despise
 ' whose Authority, to reject whose Admonitions
 ' and Councils, or to make light of those Cën-
 ' sures it shall inflict, no body must think, to do
 ' unpunish'd, much less to fall off from it,
 ' and to break its Unity: For so great stress
 ' does our Blessed Lord lay upon the Communion
 ' of the Church, that he looks upon him as an A-
 ' postate from his Religion, that obstinately separates
 ' from that Church, where the Word of God and
 ' the Sacraments are duly Preach'd and Admini-
 ' stred. *And further he goes on,* The Ministry of
 ' the pure Word of God, and the right Dispensa-
 ' tion of the Sacraments, are a sure token that
 ' wherever we are in Communion where these are
 ' found, we may continue in, and adhere to it, al-
 ' though it may abound with some Faults and Cor-
 ' ruptions. *Quinetiam poterit vel in Doctrinæ, vel*
 ' *in Sacramentorum Administratione quid piam vitii*
 C 2 *obrepere,*

' obrepere, quod alienare, nos ab ejus Communionem
 ' non debet. For there may be (adds he) some-
 ' thing faulty in the Doctrine, or in the Admini-
 ' stration of the Sacraments, which ought not to
 ' cause in us a Separation from the Church: Where-
 ' fore do not let us depart from the Communion of
 ' the Church, nor disturb the Peace and Discipline
 ' of it when orderly dispos'd.

This is his Determination in the point, and there is a great deal more to the same purpose.

I have recited the Words of this great Champion of the Dissenters Cause, because he is of so much Authority with them. And now let any one Examine the Doctrine and Discipline of our Church, and see whether he can charge us with the want of any thing necessary to Salvation, or that the Terms of our Communion are Unlawful: If neither of which can be made out against us, I don't see how the Separation of our Dissenters can be justified, according to the Principles laid down by Mr. Calvin.

But to bring his Opinion down more particularly to the difference between us, and the Presbyterians and Independants; not to mention the swarm of Sectaries which the late unhappy times either gave birth to or reviv'd, the great Point between us and them, is the Order and Government of Episcopacy: This has been decried by them as Popish and Antichristian, and the most scandalous and invidious names that could be invented fastned on it; but with how little ground I could prove from the Authority of the Ancient Fathers, and the practice of the Universal Church for 1500 Years: But this would take up too

too much time, and therefore in the room of it, I shall give you the Sense and Opinion of some, of the most learned Reformers abroad: Such as *Melancthon*, *Buser* and others, among whom was also *Mr. Calvin*, who met at *Worms* and *Ratisbon*, to reconcile some Differences between the Protestants: One of which was about Episcopacy. They declared their Judgments of this matter thus:

‘ That all things might be done orderly in the Church, according to *St. Paul’s Rule*, &c. For the avoiding of Schism there was a profitable Ordination, that a Bishop should be chosen out of many Priests, who should Rule the Church, by teaching the Gospel, and by ~~retaining~~ of Discipline.

retaining

‘ And this was so much the Opinion of our Great and Excellent *Calvin*, that in his Treatise of the Necessity of the Reformation, he makes no difficulty to say; That if there should be any so unreasonable as to refuse the Communion of a Church that was pure in its Worship and Doctrine, and not to submit himself with respect to its Government under pretence that it had retain’d an Episcopacy qualified as yours is; there would be no Censure nor Rigour of Discipline that ought not to be exercised upon them.

De F. Angle’s Letter at the end of Bishop Stillingfleet’s Unreasonableness of Separation.

And to give you the Sense of another Eminent Divine of the same Perswasion, Mounfieur *Claude*, who in a Letter of his to a Bishop of our Church, declaring his Opinion against Separation, which the

Indepen-

Independants and Presbyterians made from our Church, says, ' I shall not be afraid to give that Name (which ' was a hard one) to the holding of Assemblies apart, ' and separating from the publick Assemblies, and with- ' drawing themselves from under your Government : ' There is no Man that does not see, that this would ' be real Schism, which in its self, and of its own na- ' ture cannot chuse but be always odious to God and ' Men : And of which the Authors and Patrons, can- ' not avoid the rendring an Account, before the Dread- ' ful Tribunal of our common Master.

To give you further the Sense of one of our Modern Dissenters, and one of the greatest Authority among them: Namely Mr. *Baxter* ; who says,

Christian Di-
rectors, Pag.
741.

' That Schism is a Sin against so many, and clear, ' and vehement words of the Holy Ghosts, that it is ' utterly without excuse; Whoredoms, and Treason, ' and Perjury, are not oftner forbidden in the Gos- ' pel than this; that it is contrary to the very design ' of Christ in our Redemption, which was to re- ' concile us all to God, and to Unite and Centre us ' all in him.

These are I own sharp reprehensions, for separa- ting from the Church, we Lawfully may and ought to hold Communion with: But they are much the sharper, for coming from those, for whose Opinion in other matters, our Dissenters have so great a value and esteem.

But because these are single Testimonies, let us hear the Opinion of the Assembly of Divines, as to the reasonableness of Uniformity in Church Worship.

The

The Independants were charg'd by them with Schism, for these two things :

First, For refusing Communion with those Churches which they confessed to be true Churches, for say the Members of the Assembly, *Thus to depart from true Churches, is not to hold Communion with them as such, but rather by departing to declare them not to be such.*

Secondly, For setting up different Congregations, where they confessed there was an agreement in Doctrine.

Thus we see by them, Uniformity is a necessary thing for the Peace and Unity of the Church, but it is not to be set up, till they have got the power into their hands.

I wish all of them would lay aside their prejudices, and consider the Sin and Mischief of breaking the Unity of the Church, when God so strictly Commands, and the Wisest and most Sober Christians, have in all Ages shown the tenderest regard to it.

The Second Reason I mention'd for such an Union, as I have been speaking of, is, that nothing does more promote the Good and Welfare of Religion.

And that these two ways; *First*, By encreasing the number of Votaries to it.

And, *Secondly*, By making those who are within the Church better Christians.

As

As to the First, Nothing has been thought to be a greater hindrance to the spreading of the Gospel, and the keeping out *Jews, Turks, and Heathens*, from coming into the Church, then the Heats and Divisions of Christians: They are apt to think, that this can't be the true Religion, and the Gospel of Peace as it professeth, when they see and hear of such Heats and Animosities, such Divisions and Subdivisions maintain'd and kept up in it. This is in its self no good Objection against Christianity, for the Apostle has foretold that there will be Heresies and Schisms; but it must be own'd, that it gives a great Scandal and Offence to by-standers, and lays a mighty stumbling block in the way of those, who could they see an Unity of Worship and Affection among us, might be more easily prevail'd on to join with us. And therefore every one should be thoroughly convinc'd of the Sinfulness of communicating with the Church he belongs to, before he ventures to separate from it; least he be found guilty of giving that Scandal and Offence, I before mention'd, and thereby hinder the entrance of some into the Sheepfold of Christ Jesus.

And as Schisms and Divisions in the Church, are a great occasion of keeping out many from entering into it: So also are they no less hindrances of the good effects, which the Gospel ought to have upon the Lives of those who are within: Especially, with respect to those grand duties of Christianity, Love and good Will to one another.

This is apparent to common observation, That nothing does more strongly Cement Men in Love and Friendship, then agreement in Faith and Worship;

as

as may easily appear in those several Sects and Parties, which the Church of Christ is divided into: For how closely do we see the several Members of each Party, United to one another, as if one common Soul, as well as common Interest, actuated them all. How happy would it then be for the Church, and how far would it extend the Territories of it, if we would all agree in one Faith and Worship, if we would Glorifie God with one Mouth, and with one Mind: How would Love and good Will run through all its Members, and the whole Church become one great Body, Animated by the Blessed Spirit.

Whereas on the contrary, how sad and dismal are the effects of Schisms and Divisions? Eating up the Peace and Tranquility of Men's Minds: By raising Passions, enflaming Anger, and too too often settling in Malice and Revenge: A temper the most contrary to the Spirit of Christianity, whose whole Air and Complexion is Love and Peace. The Primitive Fathers were so sensible of the Sin and mischievous consequences of Schism, that there's hardly any Sin whatsoever, which they so much inveigh against. This Sense the greatest and most Eminent Men of our Church have had of it, and what the Opinion of those who dissented from us was, I have before related to you.

Seeing then Separations and Divisions, are of such ill effects, and in their own nature the Parents of many and great Sins: It is the Duty of every one of us, and at this time more especially, to shun and avoid them; and to lay in our utmost endeavours,

to heal and repair those Breaches, which are made both in the Church and State.

Which brings me in the *Third* and *Last* place, Humbly to offer some Advice, in order to establish those who are in the Unity of the Church, and to bring back those who are guilty of the breach of it.

The times we live in abound with variety of Sects and Parties of Religion: And the relaxation of Discipline, setting loose the Rains to unsteady Minds, renders them (if they have not a great care) too easie a Prey to subtle and seducing Persons of all Perswasions: Who to be sure never will be wanting, where there is so fair a prospect of gaining Converts to their side. And when they are thus diligent, to draw off the Members of our Communion, for both Papists and Sectaries are so, we ought to be armed and prepar'd against them.

To which purpose there can be no better Advice, then what the Apostle gave in the same Case: *Ephes. 4. 14.* Where speaking of the Unity of the Church, and of the Obligations we have to uphold, and keep it; lays in this Rule as a good caution, *That we should be no more Children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of Doctrine, by the sleight of Men, and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive.* If any one should object, this direction of the Apostle's seems to restrain, what he advises in another place, where he bids us *to prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good.* Which seems to allow of enquiring into the Doctrines and Worship of those who differ from us.

I Answer, That our Church does not require an Implicit Faith, or a blind Obedience, from those who are of its Communion: Nor is it afraid, to have its Doctrines and Discipline laid open to the World: So far from it, that it desires and heartily wishes, that the whole state of the Case, between us and those who Dissent from us, may be examin'd fairly and without prejudice. Only this may reasonably be expected from all its Members, and a regard to our own Security should put us upon it: That we would not suffer any Worldly Interest to bias our Judgment, any tucky humour to work upon us, nor any thing indeed but a firm perswasion of the sinfulness of continuing in our Communion to draw us off from it; and lastly that we would always consult with our Spiritual Guides, (who are appointed by God to watch over our Souls) before we leave the Church we are Baptiz'd and brought up in: Ever praying to God to assist us with his Grace, and to direct and keep us in the true Faith and Worship of him. Those who sincerely endeavour, by all these means to serve God in the most acceptable manner, but cannot get over some Errors in their Judgment, or prejudices of their Education; we ought to entertain good Thoughts of, and to use them with tenderness and Affection.

But I believe, had all these directions been observed, and I can't see which of them can justifiably be left out; we should not have had so many departed from the Communion of our Church. And therefore I most earnestly desire, that we would all firmly imprint in our Minds, how great a stress is laid in the Scriptures (which is the Word) upon

keeping the Peace and Unity of the Church. And that we would take this along with it, that nothing but its terms being sinful and unlawful, can warrant a Separation from it.

And because the Peace and Union of the Church, is of so great Consideration, and our welfare in this Life, and that which is to come, so much depending on it: I heartily wish, that those who have actually joined in our Communion in all the acts of Worship, even kneeling at the Sacrament: (which is very much scrupled by some) would continue constantly to do it. These cannot alledge tenderness of Conscience, because what they once did, upon serious Thoughts, they may do the same agen, while the same Thoughts remain upon them. Some I know plead a Necessity for their Separation, because they say they cannot hold Communion with us, but against their Conscience: (which I own, if due care be made use of to be rightly inform'd) is God's Vicegerent, and great regard is to be had unto it; but then they must take care, as I have said before, to use all endeavours to be rightly informed of their Duty. But as for those who upon some State Preferment, or profitable Place, have communicated with us: No such necessity of going off agen can be pleaded by them: For they seem by so doing, to be rather Members of the State, then of the Church. And therefore I heartily recommend to such, a tenderness for the Churches Peace: And that they would not contribute any thing to the enlarging the breaches of it, which I'm afraid are much wid'ned, by that addition to our separate Meetings, which is made by those who own they can, and that Lawfully too, join in our Communion.

I wish also that our Dissenters of all sorts, but especially those who are the most prevailing Parties of them. Would consider what dreadful Calamities have befallen this Kingdom, both in Church and State, upon the account of the unhappy Divisions and Separations, which have been among us: I would recite over to you some of the particulars, in, and since the late unhappy Times, which may justly be laid at that door: But that my Design and Desire is, to heal, and not to fret old Sores; and if I should mention them, it would be to no other purpose, than to awaken our prudent Caution, in preventing the like Calamities for the future. For there being some of that Leaven still in the Land, which a kind Indulgence has cherish'd to a formidable Power, the Wisdom of the Serpent can never be blamed in us, so long as we observe the other part, of being as harmless as Doves. Charity and foresight are very consistent with a Christian's Character. So that our Prudence, and something else, will be call'd in question; if we suffer, and much more if we assist those, who have always shown a Disposition to undermine our Church, to get so much power as to be able to effect it.

But let all our Zeal be tempered with Charity, for where that is wanting, the Spirit and Life of Christianity is gone also. Let us carry a condescending temper towards all Men, even to those who most differ from us: That they may see 'tis their Errors, not their Persons which our quarrel is against. *Let all Bitterness, and Wrath, and Clamour, and Evil speaking be laid aside*; for 'tis high time for us all to lay by all heats and Animosities, to consider what have been the effects of our Divisions, and that
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the same Causes will produce the same sad Effects again. We should all consider and that seriously too, what formidable Enemies abroad, are undermining both our Church and State: And withal think of what our Saviour says, *That a Kingdom divided against its self cannot stand.* And I could shew upon good Authority, that the Emissaries of a Foreign Church, were here in the late unhappy Times, under the disguise of Protestant Dissenters: Enflaming them against our Church, in order to make their Conquest over both of us the easier. One thing more I shall recommend to those of our Communion, and which is so material, that for the sake of it, the Church its self was founded: And that is, that we would lead Good and Vertuous Lives, in all manner of Holy Conversation; that we would walk worthy of so high a Calling as Christianity is, and of so sound a part of the Catholick Church as we are Members of; this we must do for our own sakes, as we intend to be partakers of the Benefits of the Gospel; and as we would win over those who dissent from us; for there's no Argument more popular and forcing, then a Good and Vertuous Life. Indeed some who separate from us, have alledg'd as a reason of it, the wicked Lives of some of our Members: For which they have neither Reason nor Authority; for as to the Fact, I believe a Scrutiny would make them equally Criminal; and for the Authority upon such a pretence, our Saviour seems to be against it: For when he was ask'd whither the Tares should be separated from the Wheat, he gave his Judgment against it, and order'd that they should both grow up together till the Harvest: Intimating thereby,
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That he would not have Men too prying, and inquisitive into the Lives of others; but to take care and mend their own: And leave that to the Searcher of Hearts, who indeed is the only proper Person to manage this affair.

However, Let us for the honour of our Religion, endeavour to take off all manner of Imputation of this nature: And to adorn by our good Lives and Conversations, the Purity of that Church, which 'tis our Happiness to be born and bred up in; for we must all own that others being as wicked as our selves, will never Justifie us in any Evil Courses.

Now that this may be the daily Care and Study of all of us, and especially of those whose Stations give a greater lustre to Religious Actions; Let us Pray in the Words of our Church for this Day.

O Lord, we beseech thee mercifully to receive the Prayers of this People which call upon thee, and Grant that they may perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also may have Grace and Power faithfully to fulfil the same, through Jesus Christ our Lord. To whom with the Holy Three Persons, and one God; be ascrib'd all Honour, Power and Dominion, henceforth and for ever more. Amen.

E I N I S.

That he would not have men too much and impudently
take up the lives of others; but to take care and
love their own. And that that is the business of
man, who indeed is a creature of God, and
therefore to be loved.
However, let us for the honour of our Religion
endeavour to take off all manner of impurities of
our nature: And to adorn by our good lives and
Conversations, the Kingdom of our God, which is
our Father, to be seen and loved in us, we will
all own that others being as wicked as ourselves, will
never justify us in any evil Course.
Now that we may have the daily Care and Study of
all that is good, and that whole persons give
a greater lustre to our Actions: Let us pray in
the Words of the Psalmist.



O Lord, we beseech thee mercifully to receive the Prayers
of this People which we now offer, and Grant that
they may perceive and know what things they ought
to do, and also may persevere in them, and ever lastingly
to keep the Law, which we have received of thee, O God our Father.
To whom with the Holy Spirit Father, Son, and Holy
Ghost, be ascribed all Honour, Power, and Dominion
forever and ever. Amen.

